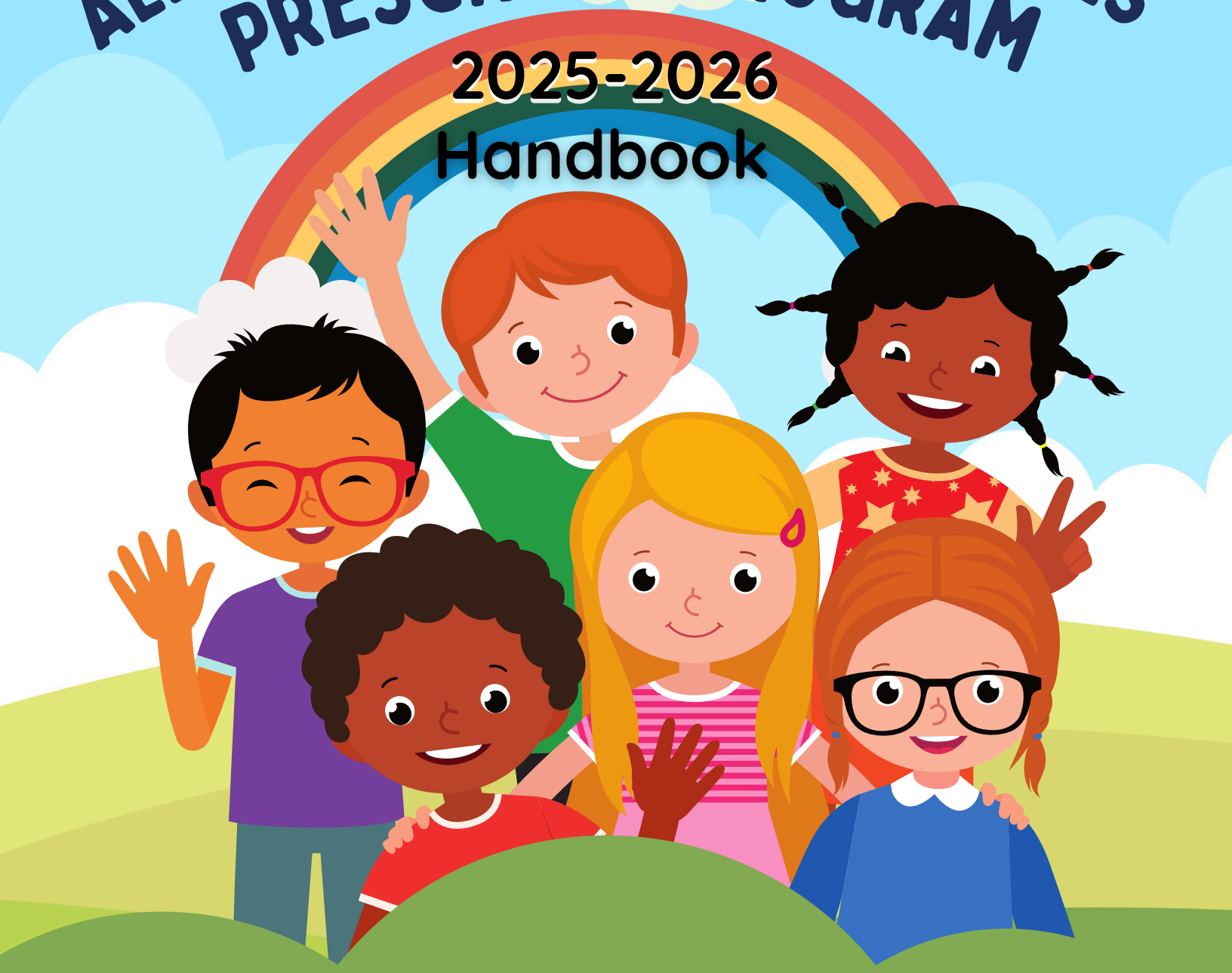
ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

2025-2026 Handbook



Last updated 7/2025

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEW MEXICO Early Childhood Education & Care Department

New Mexico pre K Invest A Little Get A Lot

WELCOME

TO APS PRESCHOOL

VISION STATEMENT

All Albuquerque Public Schools
early childhood programs will provide
exemplary developmentally appropriate practices in all-inclusive environments.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Early Childhood Team will support schools in implementing developmentally appropriate best practices, in high-quality Early Childhood Classrooms for children and their families.

PRE-K PROGRAMS
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) with collaborative partners of YDI Head Start, City of Albuquerque Child Development Centers and other Pre-K providers are working to ensure that 3 and 4-year old students will have access to high quality Preschool services through a non-competitive process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS PRESCHOOL

Eligibility/Inclusion.....4
Immigrant Student Regardless of Documentation Status.....4
Recruitment & Enrollment.....5
Registration.....6
Selection/Prioritization.....6
Waitlist.....6

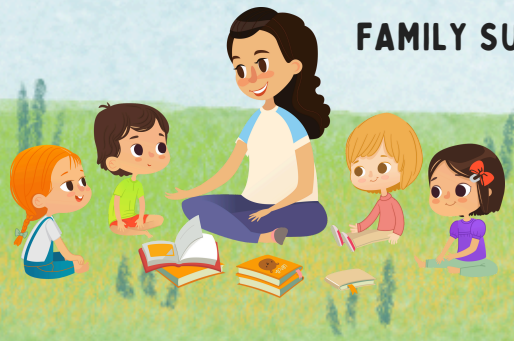
PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Attendance & Illness.....7
Home Visits, Meet the Teacher & Open House.....8
Family Engagement Activities.....8
Parent Teacher Conferences.....8
Immunizations.....9
Student Privacy Rights.....9
Administration of Medicine at School.....9
Picking up your child from school.....10
Transportation for Preschool.....10
Bus Cancellations/Delayed Start.....10
Educational Field Trips.....10
Program Expectations.....11
Toileting Policy.....12
Guidance Policy.....12
Non Suspension/Non Expulsion Policy.....12

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Family Volunteer Guidelines.....13
Screening and Assessment.....14
Health Screenings.....14
Meals.....14

CHILD FIND.....15
CURRICULUM.....16
CULTURAL & LINGUISTIC RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION.....17
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS.....17
FAMILY SURVEY.....17



WHAT IS PRESCHOOL?

Preschool provides children with the foundational skills needed to be successful lifelong learners. All children come to the classroom with previous learning experience and they have an opportunity with their families to develop positive home school connections as part of their transition process to Kindergarten. Preschool children learn to be learners, how to be curious about how things work and find answers to problems.

Children will have multiple opportunities to have hands-on experiences and opportunities to learn about things that apply to their lives. Teachers will engage children in rich conversations and ask them open-ended questions as part of their intentional teaching lesson planning and interactions to expand on children's learning.

Early Childhood preschool curriculum emphasizes learning through play which is an active teaching and learning method that capitalizes on a child's natural desire to engage in play. This also includes social-emotional practices for self-regulation, creating relationships and language development. A Preschool classroom focuses on things like self-control and positive behavior in the classroom. Teachers help students by practicing how to wait your turn, how to share, how to deal with frustration and how to solve conflicts. Since early childhood is the beginning of the development of social-emotional skills and the executive functions for self-regulation, staff in Preschool will support these skills that are just beginning to develop during the preschool age.

ELIGIBILITY/INCLUSION

To be eligible for Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) early childhood programs, including PreK, children must be 4 years old by August 31st of the school year they are enrolling in. For the mixed 3s and 4s classrooms, children must be 3 years old by August 31st of the school year they are enrolling in. Additionally, students must reside within the APS district.

All of our classrooms provide inclusive opportunities for children with IEP's and placement is an IEP team decision.

IMMIGRANT STUDENTS REGARDLESS OF DOCUMENTED STATUS

Neither the constitution of the state of New Mexico nor state law establishes citizenship as a requirement for school-age children to attend public school. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled citizenship status cannot be used to deny public school admission to school-age children. Schools shall not:

- Deny admission to a school age child on the basis of known, or suspected, undocumented status.
- Engage in any practice to deter or discourage the right of a student to attend public school.
- Require students or parents/legal guardians to disclose or document their immigration status or make inquiries that would expose their undocumented status.
- Require Social Security numbers.

RECRUITMENT and ENROLLMENT

Preschool enrollment for 3- and 4-year-olds opens in the Spring of the year prior to starting a Pre-K program. Enrollment is announced through through multiple outlets including the APS website, school site websites, social media and local media.

We do not discriminate when selecting student participants based on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin nor any other unique demographics of which our community's children represent.

If you would like information regarding Pre-K for your child, please visit https://www.aps.edu/students-parents/early-childhood.
You can submit questions through the Let's Talk portal on our website.

Families may call the APS Early Childhood office between the hours of 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. or leave a message anytime at 505-253-0320.

We offer a Early Childhood School Choice Fair once a year in early February to increase collaboration efforts between Albuquerque Public Schools Early Childhood Education and other local early learning providers to ensure children receive the educational services that meet their needs.

APS Early Childhood, YDI: Head Start/Early Start, City of Albuquerque Child Development Center, CFYD, along with community providers and private day care centers share the responsibility of locating age-appropriate children in our community for participation in an effective early learning educational program.

We acknowledge that all families have varying needs and we provide information to parents regarding community and private programs to help find the best program fit for them and their child.

REGISTRATION

APS ParentVue is the registration system that PreK-12th grade uses for beginning the process of enrolling a child into the district.

Families registering for the first time (never had a child in an APS school or an APS program) will follow these steps:

- Create a ParentVue account. Start by opening your browser and going to https://enroll.aps.edu
- Click on more "Create a New Account"
- Follow the self-guided process

- **Important**-select the right school year in which your child will begin Preschool
- **Important-**select three school choices you are okay with your child being at.

Families who have already had a child in an APS school or APS program (child find):

- Start by opening your browser and going to https://enroll.aps.edu
- Click on Step 3
- Login with your ParentVue username and password
- **Important**-select the right school year in which your child will begin Pre-K Follow the self-guided process
- **Important-**select three school choices you are okay with your child being at.

SELECTION/PRIORITIZATION

There are conditions where one child is selected over another for participating in an Albuquerque Public Schools PreK program.
PreK will consider the following situations, as priority needs when making participant selections:

- Children who live in the attendance area of a school with a PreK
- Children who are experiencing homelessness
- Children with identified special needs
- Children who are in Foster Care or under CYFD Custody

WAIT LIST

We maintain waitlists for each of our school sites that have NM PreK.
We also work with families to help find availability at other APS locations with Preschool or refer families to other early learning providers that may have availability in their NM Pre-K classroom.

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS and POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Albuquerque Public Schools wants your preschool child to be at school all day, every day. Children develop and grow so rapidly that missed time in school affects both their academic and social development.

All registered preschool students are required to attend 85% of the time.

If your child is not attending 85% of the time you will be requested to attend a student success meeting with the parent, teacher, and school administrator to discuss and create an attendance support plan to help get your child to school.

ILLNESS

We do understand children become ill and may need to stay at home to recover. As parents or guardians, please keep your child home if he/she becomes ill & does not feel well enough to take part in school activities. This helps to prevent the spread of the illness to others at school.

These are some of the examples of when your child should be kept home:

- **Fever-A temperature above 100.4°F (38°C) is a fever.**

Your child may return to school if they have had no fever for 24 hours without fever reducing medication (acetaminophen, Tylenol®, ibuprofen, etc.) and if they feel well/are improving.

- **Vomiting and/or diarrhea with or without a fever; three or more times in six hours.**

Your child may return to school if 24 or more hours have passed from the last episode of vomiting/diarrhea, and/or at least 24 hours fever free as above, and symptoms are improving.

- **Respiratory Tract Illnesses: cough/runny nose/other severe cold symptoms.**

Your child has symptoms that keep them from participating in school, such as:

- Fatigue, extreme tiredness
- Persistent cough, sneezing
- Headache, body aches, earache and/or chills (especially if accompanied by fever)
- Severe sore throat, especially if accompanied by headache/upset stomach
- Unknown/undiagnosed rash or other untreated skin conditions
- Eye irritation: Eye drainage, crusting, pain, and/or redness may be a sign of infection
- and may need to be checked by a provider.

Your child may be at school as long as there are no other symptoms that prevent them from participating (fever, pain, etc).

If your child has been seen by a provider for illness and started on antibiotic treatment, they should remain at home for the first full 24 hours of medication.

Remember to report your child's absence per school reporting process each day he/she is out of school.

Remember to report your child's absence per school reporting process each day your child is out of school.

HOME VISITS

Once accepted into a school's Pre-K program, the families are scheduled for a Home Visit at the family's residence or a location of their choice, but not on school property unless requested by the parent. During this Home Visit, the teacher answers questions and asks a series of questions to gather information that will guide the instructional practices for the child to achieve full participation in accessing the Early Learning Guidelines (ELG). This meeting helps to set the stage for a positive relationship between family and Pre-K staff with the child at the center. Home visits are a requirement of the NM PreK Program Standards.

MEET THE TEACHER

This is an opportunity for families to visit the classroom with their child before the first day of school to see the classroom environment and help plan for a warm release of the child to the Pre-K staff on the first day of school.

OPEN HOUSE

Open House is scheduled to allow the family to hear from the school's principal and meet additional school staff that support their child as well as see the engaging curriculum and materials that their child will get to interact with in the preschool classroom.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Each school is required to provide 90 hours of family engagement activities per year. The 90-hours of Family Engagement both incorporates learning activities and guides the family's understanding of their child's performance targets. Some engagement activities have both whole school and small group learning activities. This begins the process of moving the family from the sheltered learning environment of Pre-K and into the open view of elementary education.

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent teacher conferences occur twice a year. During each gathering of family and school staff the conversations begin to transition the child to Kindergarten. Each conversation is guided by the Early Learning Guidelines that move the child towards meeting age-appropriate standards for entry into Kindergarten.

IMMUNIZATIONS

New Mexico state statute requires all students be currently immunized before entrance into public school. The school or licensed school nurse shall instruct appropriate personnel in the procedure of recording immunizations in the student's Cumulative Health Record.

STUDENT PRIVACY RIGHTS

Albuquerque Public Schools adheres to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regarding confidentiality of student information. All of our student records are maintained in locked fireproof cabinets. Contact the administrator at your PreK school if you have additional questions.

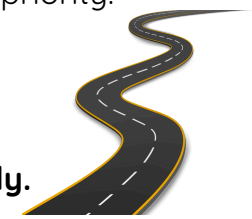
ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINE AT SCHOOL

If possible, all medications should be given at home.
If medications must be given during school hours or during athletic team practices/events, they shall be administered in compliance with the New Mexico Administrative Code, New Mexico Nursing Practice Act, New Mexico School Health Manual Standards, New Mexico Athletic Trainers Practice Act, and APS Procedural Directive. All medication administration at school requires the parent to provide the appropriate medication authorization form to be completed and signed by the student's parent and/or medical provider.

- All APS medication authorization forms are posted on this web page, https://www.aps.edu/nursing/nursing-forms, and can be downloaded by families and or providers for completion. APS school staff will no longer be able to facilitate completion of these forms by the student's provider. Providers may require the parent or guardian to sign a Release of Information due to HIPAA regulations before completing the Medical Authorization Form for administration of medication at school. Please contact your provider to determine their requirements for completing this school form. Contact your school nurse for additional explanation of these requirements.

PICKING UP A PRE-K STUDENT PRIOR TO THE END OF THE DAY

All contacts, regardless of the reason why a child is being picked up, will be asked to show a picture ID to school personnel. The safety of your children is always our top priority.



TRANSPORTATION FOR PRESCHOOL

Families of NM PreK students will drive the student to and from school daily.

- Transportation for Special Education Preschool students enrolled in a Special Education Preschool program will be provided according to terms identified in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan.
- Students who are experiencing homelessness and are enrolled at the Mckinney Vento site for NM Pre-K may receive transportation based on need and availability.

Bus Cancellations/Delayed Start

In the event that it becomes necessary to delay the start of a school day due to weather, or other circumstances, Albuquerque Public Schools is implementing a standardized procedure to cover a "Delayed Start Announcement". Should it be necessary to implement a delayed start, Albuquerque Public Schools officials will send a school wide phone call through "School Messenger" and will contact the local media sources and inform them to broadcast that "Albuquerque Public Schools will be on a delayed start of school". This announcement will trigger the following predetermined actions:

- **ALL APS PRE-K STAFF WILL REPORT TWO (2) HOURS LATER THAN THEIR NORMAL REPORTING TIME**
- **If there is a delayed day, due to inclement weather, there will be no bus service or program for special education preschool enrolled in a DPC classroom.**
- **NM PreK students will follow the abbreviated day schedule as the rest of your school site.**

EDUCATIONAL FIELD TRIPS

Students must ride the bus to and from the venue of the trip.
Family members who are chaperoning the field trip must ride the bus also.
Any family member without an approved background check will not be allowed to chaperone with their child on the school sponsored educational trip.

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

- Each day upon arriving in the classroom you will need to have an adult (18 and older) sign your child in and out of the classroom.
- Please indicate on the sign in sheet if your child will be having home or school lunch.
- Please pick up your child on time. Children that have not been picked up after five minutes will be taken to the school office to wait for their parents.
- Please inform the teachers if you need to bring your child to school late or pick them up early.
- Children can bring a light blanket and pillow for rest time. On Fridays, schools will send home these items to be washed.
- Children can bring a special stuffed animal or toy to rest with at rest time. All other toys should remain at home.
- In the event of snow, all families will be notified via Albuquerque Public Schools' SchoolMessenger phone messenger in the event of a two-hour delay or school closure. You can also check the APS website at www.aps.edu for information about delays and cancellations.
- Unless it is below freezing children will be going outside to play on a daily basis please dress your child accordingly with appropriate attire.
- Each family will participate in at least 3 NM Pre-K Family Engagement Meeting/Events
- Pre-K staff will conduct at least one home visit as part of the enrollment process and complete a preschool home visitation form.
- The family will fill out the ASQ-3 and ASQ; SE-2 screenings discussed at the home visit and return questionnaires to school within a week. See screenings section.
- Once you have an approved Volunteer background check through APS, sign in at the office and obtain a Visitor's Badge each time you want to volunteer.

TOILET LEARNING POLICY

One of our goals in PreK is to teach students independence. Learning how to use the toilet is one of those independent skills. It is not a requirement in the Student Handbook nor in Board Policy/Procedural Directive, for preschool students to be potty trained. Students cannot be refused access to education if they are not fully potty trained.

In PreK we focus on toilet learning instead of diaper changing.
In PreK classrooms children will be assisted with the toilet learning process.
Students will be escorted to the bathroom by an adult staff member and classroom staff will instruct students on how to change their pull up, clean themselves, and change their clothes if needed.
We do not place children on changing tables unless they have a disability that prevents them from standing. Please note that this is different from diapering and toileting that is required for students with disabilities.
Parents will be responsible for providing pull ups, wipes, and a change of clothes if their child is not fully potty trained.
School staff may request a meeting to discuss how to implement a toilet learning plan at both home and school for consistency of skill development.

GUIDANCE POLICY

Social emotional development and school success are linked as seen in a growing body of child research. A child's early years set the path for the relationships and successes they will experience for the rest of their lives, making it crucial that children's earliest experiences truly foster—and never harm—their development. During these years, children's brains are developing rapidly, influenced by the experiences, both positive and negative, that they share with their families, caregivers, teachers, peers, and in their communities.

In each Pre-K classroom, the teachers implement strategies from NM Pyramid to meet a child's social emotional well-being by:

- Developing their students' self-esteem by using culturally and linguistically best practices
- Encouraging independence
- Promoting children's emotional regulation and decision-making skills.

NON SUSPENSION/NON EXPULSION POLICY

NM PreK programs do not suspend or expel children.
If an alternative placement is being considered due to a child's behavior, the program follows the process outlined in Section 4.A.5 of the NM PreK Program Standards or an IEP will be scheduled and reviewed.
This includes implementing environmental modifications, interventions, input from preschool coaches, and family collaboration.
Documentation of all supports must be maintained, and the PreK Specialist must be consulted before any placement changes are made.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Our Pre-K program is based on a family-centered philosophy that guides all aspects of our program planning and implementation. We believe that families play an important role in their child's academic and social/emotional success.

One activity that encourages our home school partnership is our home visits that we conduct at the beginning of each school year. These visits allow children to meet their teachers in their own environment, which helps ease their transition to the school environment and makes them feel more comfortable.

We value the parent-teacher partnership and encourage family members to volunteer in our program. Aside from volunteering in the program, we offer many family engagement activities and field trips throughout the year that we encourage you to attend with your child.

FAMILY VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

We encourage and welcome family participation.

If you would like to volunteer to help out in the classroom or attend any field trips, you are now required to get an APS Supervised Volunteer background check.

APS Pre-K can pay for one background check per family but there is a process to follow. You will request a background check through your teacher who will contact the early childhood department.

The Early Childhood department will send you an email with details on how to submit your supervised volunteer background check and you will be required to forward your approval letter to the Early Childhood Department.

If other family members would also like to volunteer, the cost is $12 per person.

If you would like to apply on your own, the process is online and it is simple to apply. Just go to www.aps.edu/volunteer-with-aps, go to "Volunteer Now" click red button "APS Supervised Volunteer Clearance Request" & set up an account in WinOcular. This background check needs to be processed within 30 days of entering the program. The background check is good for two years at any APS school.

When volunteering we ask:

- That you sign in at the office and obtain a visitor's badge each time you volunteer.
- Please be respectful to teachers and other parents.
- Children cannot be removed from the direct supervision of staff.
- The use of physical contact to reprimand a child is not allowed. Classroom staff will handle disciplinary action.
- Please do not use devices such as cell phones when volunteering.
- Respect the confidentiality and privacy of children, families, and staff.
- Please refrain from taking photos or videos of other children.

SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

The PreK teachers conduct developmental screenings of all Pre-K children prior to the third month of attendance. The screenings used in the Pre-K program are the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the ASQ SE. These screening tools provide information about the development of children in six distinct developmental areas: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal-social, and social emotional. The ASQ and the ASQ SE are family friendly screening tools and are completed by families.

Families are an important part of the screening process. When the family completes the questions on the ASQ-3/ASQ: SE they return the forms to the Pre-K teacher. The teacher will score, and analyze the information. Families will be informed of the results.

We work with families to access further screening if needed through Child Find. All APS Pre-K classrooms provide an inclusive Pre-K setting to accommodate all children's needs.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

Each child in the Pre-K program must receive the following health screenings by a school health care professional within the first ninety days of attendance. Parents are notified about all results from screenings and appropriate referrals are made to address any identified health concerns.

- physical examination
- current immunization
- vision screening
- hearing screening
- dental screening

If the school nurse contacts you please have your child evaluated as soon as possible, and return the completed form to the school nurse. A general screening is a process that allows identification of physical growth, vision, hearing, or dental concerns. If you do not wish to have your child participate in these yearly screenings, please notify the nurse at your child's school.

MEALS

All school personnel are notified about each child's special nutritional needs including allergies, medical conditions, and physician requests for dietary restrictions. Dining takes place in the preschool classroom or school cafeteria.

All APS programs participate in the USDA meal program.

- Two meals are provided per day for full day programs and one meal per day for half day programs.
- Meals meet USDA requirements

CHILD FIND

Child find is part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children who are suspected of having developmental delays or disabilities in one or more of the following areas:

- Communication skills
- Cognitive skills
- Motor skills
- Daily Living skills
- Vision
- Hearing
- Orthopedic need

Any parent/guardian with concerns about their child's development (speaking, understanding language, learning, eye-hand coordination, movement, socialization, hearing, vision, or any other developmental concern) may contact Child Find for a screening. A child must be at least 3 years old but not eligible for kindergarten yet and be a resident of the Albuquerque Public School District.

Parents/guardian must provide consent before the screening can take place. The screening takes about 45 minutes.

- The screener will play with your child using developmental screening tools.
- You will be asked questions about things your child may do at home or in childcare.
- Children will also have their vision and hearing checked.
- The screener will then talk with the parents/guardian about the outcomes of the screening and any next steps to be taken. This may include further evaluation(s) or referrals to other community services.

If a student is screened and recommended for further evaluation, the screener will make an appointment with the parents at the screening for the indicated evaluation(s).
After the evaluation, if special education services are being considered, an IEP (Individual Education Plan) meeting will be held.
The IEP team, which may include:

- Parents/caregivers
- IEP specialist
- Special Education Preschool Teacher
- General Education Representative
- If indicated an Speech and Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and/or Physical Therapist

The team will review the evaluation results, determine eligibility and write the child's IEP.

Curriculum

The New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines and the New Mexico Essentials Indicators are the foundation for capturing important aspects of children's learning and therefore guides the instructional planning.

Using NM Early Learning Guidelines, we design lesson plans to meet each child's developmental needs. We gather information about the child through the use of portfolios and checklists to ensure the child is making progress in meeting age-appropriate standards.

Children's progress is monitored three times per year using the Early Childhood Observational Tool (ECOT) or the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO). The information that is collected through observation and portfolio documentation is shared with each family at scheduled Parent Teacher Conferences during the school year.

The preschool day focuses on learning through play. Play is a child's work and provides children with the opportunity to learn from their environment. Research has shown that children who engage in high quality play experiences can achieve higher levels of cognitive functioning which positively affects their future academic achievement.

In APS Pre-K classrooms our curriculum consists of

- SAVVAS Three Cheers for Pre-K
- Waterford learning software in reading, math, & science that adapts to each child's individual needs
- Heggerty which develops phonological awareness
- NM Pyramid to support Social Emotional Learning

Each child's day includes:

- Time for independent work
- Group meals
- Outdoor learning play
- Small group activities
- Rest time
- Structured free choice play

Our learning centers consist of:

- Science
- Literacy
- Blocks
- Art
- Writing
- Dramatic Play
- Table Top activities
- Custom centers designed by the teacher

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION

Every child in Albuquerque Public Schools has diverse strengths rooted in their family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. (State of New Mexico, Children, Youth and Families Department, 2010). Through their home language and culture, families share a sense of identity and belonging (McCabe et al, 2013). In our Preschool school classrooms, materials reflect the culture, language, identity, and reality of the children, families, and communities served.

All teachers have knowledge of second language acquisition to be able to support students appropriately through the use of a print-rich labeling of home languages, use of second language acquisition strategies, building relationships between children, and promoting home languages while supporting English language development.

Translation services are available so families can fully participate in meetings or events such as parent teacher conferences.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

In addition to district wide PD Days and scheduled school breaks there will be no preschool four times per year to maintain a high level of teaching practices and program implementation. Your teacher will share these specific dates with you.

FAMILY SURVEY

Family feedback is an essential part of our continuous quality improvement. We value your input and insight into how we can improve our programs and to collect this information we send out a family survey via email once a year in the Spring.